

July/August 2025 **Randall Price**

Digging Up King Solomon (Part 2)

Outside biblical circles, the account of King Solomon has been regarded as a fairy tale. Continuing our examination of the historical and archaeological evidence supporting Solomon, we now focus on one of his greatest achievements: Israel's First Temple in Jerusalem.

Although no known remains of this Temple have been discovered, significant archaeological data affirms its historical existence. The architectural plan for Solomon's Temple reveals similarity to Near Eastern tripartite temple design (similar to the Egyptian long-room temple); and its ritual vessels show influences from Egypt, Syro-Phoenicia, and Mesopotamia.

While King Solomon employed his own workers (1 Ki. 9:15–23; 12:3–4), the skill in temple building and furnishing was a foreign enterprise. The Bible records that Phoenician King Hiram of Tyre and workers from Byblos (both cities in Lebanon) helped construct Solomon's Temple (5:17–18; 7:13–14, 40; 9:11; 10:11). The Phoenicians (Sidonians) controlled the vast reserves of Lebanon's forests, where the most prized cedarwood for such construction grew. Hiram supplied materials for both Kings David (2 Sam. 5:11; 1 Ki. 5:1; 2 Chr. 2:3–18) and Solomon (1 Ki. 9:11). In *Against Apion I*, Jewish historian Josephus recorded that Hiram also built a royal palace and a temple for Melqart, the local deity of Tyre.

Though God provided the plans for the First Temple (1 Chr. 28:11–19), men built it based on construction techniques of their time. Compared with regional Iron Age sanctuary architecture at sites closest to Israel, such as Tell Ta'yinat and 'Ain Dara, a common style was employed among them. The 'Ain Dara temple shares 33 of the 65 architectural elements mentioned in the Bible in connection with Solomon's Temple.¹

Regarding the Temple's architectural details (1 Ki. 6), 10th-century BC (Solomon's era) ceramic ritual objects were discovered in Khirbet Qeiyafa, a provincial

Judean town in the Elah Valley, where impressive fortifications, a scribal room, and a palace have been uncovered.

The details of these vessels helped scholars recover lost architectural diction from the Hebrew Bible. Scripture used unique terms to describe Solomon's Temple's architecture. Used only in this text, it left later Hebrew readers and translators puzzled. For example, a design feature mentioned in **1 Kings 7:4** translated as "windows with beveled frames" (cf. 6:4) and "artistic window frames in three rows" (NASB) is now rightly understood as "triple recessed doorways" and "triglyphs" (ornamental decorations above the doorways) based on the images on the model shrines.²

In addition, two bronze pillars, known as Jachin and Boaz, that stood in front of the Temple's vestibule (7:15–22) resemble Khirbet Qeiyafa's ceramic models. Ritual objects necessary to carry out the priestly service of the Temple, such as the bronze lavers and incense shovels (vv. 27–47), have archaeological counterparts in Cyprus and Tel Dan.

Moreover, the Jehoash Tablet, a large, rectangular, inscribed basalt stone tablet, was discovered in 2002 near the Temple Mount. The tablet contained a text concerning renovations in the First Temple resembling the biblical account in 2 Kings 12.³ And 8th-century BC pottery finds from a trench dug near the Dome of the Rock in 2006 inadvertently revealed the location of the House of Oil within Solomon's Temple.⁴

From Solomonic Gate complexes in Jerusalem, Hazor, Gezer, and Megiddo⁵ to Solomonic copper mines in Timna,⁶ even more evidence could be amassed.

Clearly, archaeology has dug up the Bible's famous King Solomon.

ENDNOTES

1.

1.

1.

1. John Monson, "The New 'Ain Dara Temple: Closest Solomonic Parallel" *Biblical Archaeology Review*, May/June 2000, 29–33.

2. Christopher Eames, "The Khirbet Qeiyafa Shrine Model: Insights Into Biblical Architecture," *Let The Stones Speak*, May/June 2024, 7–13.
3. Hershel Shanks, "What About the Jehoash Inscription?" *Biblical Archaeology Review*, September/October 2003; "New Reading Bolsters Case for Jehoash Tablet," *Biblical Archaeology Review*, July/August 2004.
4. Leen Ritmeyer, "In Search of Solomon's Temple: The location of Solomon's Temple on the Temple Mount," presentation to the Near East Archaeological Society (2008).
5. Hermann Michael Niemann, "Megiddo and Solomon: A Biblical Investigation in Relation to Archaeology," *Journal of the Institute of Archaeology of Tel Aviv University* 27:1 (2000), 61–74.
6. Aaron Kalman, "Timna copper mines dated to King Solomon era," *The Times of Israel*, September 8, 2013 .



Dr. Randall Price is a well-known author and world-renowned archaeologist. He is also the founder and president of World of the Bible Ministries (worldofthebible.com).